1996 discharge: EC general budget

1997/2075(DEC) - 30/04/1997 - Document attached to the procedure

OBJECTIVE: to propose an action plan to reform customs transit in Europe, the main objective of which is to strengthen the efficiency and security of Community customs transit. The action plan, which covers both internal aspects (Community customs procedures) and external aspects of the customs policy (beyond the scope of the common customs territory), is based on five main lines of attack: . a simple and coherent system which is easy for customs officers and operators to understand and apply; . the implementation of modern procedures (computerization); . adaptation to the diversity of operations and situations; . increased fraud prevention and protection of interests; . better availability of information. CONTENT: the adoption of this action plan to reform customs transit follows on from the publication by the Commission in October 1996 of a report and communication on customs transit which highlighted the weaknesses of the present system: - saturated documentary procedures; - weakened system security; - fraud involving considerable sums etc. It also responds to the conclusions of the temporary committee of inquiry of the European Parliament into transit (12 March 1997). The action plan presents all the regulatory and operational measures which the Commission intends to submit in order to boost the efficiency and security of customs transit and protection of the financial interests of the Member States and the Community. The plan also comes within the framework of the "Customs 2000" Community action programme (COD95087) which seeks to strengthen cooperation between customs administrations and attain a level of integration comparable to that of a single Community administration. The main measures planned are to: - strengthen cooperation between customs administrations and decide on a common approach to fraud prevention in the 23 countries in question (Member States of the European Union, countries of the EFTA, Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia); - set up joint inspection teams in the customs services to ensure that the regulations are applied by the customs administrations; - draft a new single convention on simpler European customs formalities to replace the various legal frameworks which currently coexist; - conclude a "memorandum of understanding" between customs and operators setting out their reciprocal responsibilities and commitments; - draft a national transit procedure management plan in each country in order to improve the time taken to return copy 5 of the "T" document and to complete formalities; - create a European network of national coordinators and local correspondents in each main customs office; - give a clear affirmation of the responsibility of operators (principal) to check and control the goods entrusted to them and monitor the transit operations which they institute; - resort more frequently to sealing vehicles, which will need in future to be approved for the purpose and to carry a "T" plate (as for "TIR"); - set up a joint inquiry agency and crime unit at Community level; - harmonize the powers of customs officials in order to guarantee a uniform level of security throughout the territory covered; - adjust the amount and type of guarantee on the basis of the risks incurred and re-examine the guarantee waiver in the case of transit operations by sea, air and rail; - reorganize recovery procedures in order to guarantee equal treatment of debtors and solve difficulties which arise as the result of the different territories of application of taxes; - improve training for customs officials in the 23 countries by distributing a transit manual backed up by training courses.